PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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Community members work on the drainage improvements in Bisimallah Jan Village of Zor Shar in Sub-District Six of Kandahar City. Photo: USAID/LGCD

STABILIZATION

Sub-District Six Manager Increases Service Delivery in Kandahar City's Zor Shar Area: Following the successful completion of 13 community stabilization grants (CSGs) in Kandahar City's sub-district six, Local Governance USAID's and Development project worked with the sub-district six manager and local wakils (leaders) to programming into the Zor Shar area. In preliminary engagements with the wakil and USAID, representatives from the villages of Bismillah Jan, Noor Mohammad, and Hajji Salih Mohammad aired grievances concerning the poor state of their main roads. Currently, these roads generate high amounts of dust during the summer and become flooded and muddy during the rainy season, disrupting vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Community

representatives met with the sub-district six manager in late January to sign grant agreements for three CSGs. The grants were designed to improve road conditions by funding construction and rehabilitation activities that included 650 meters of drainage, 95 concrete slabs for drainage cover, 70 meters of sidewalk, and 730 meters of road gravelling, while generating approximately 2,300 person-days of employment. In March, the community of Bismillah Jan Village completed its project and the communities of Noor Mohammad and Hajji Salih Mohammad reached 50 percent completion. Through these CSGs, the sub-district six manager is putting into action Hamkari de Kandahar Lepara - the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's plan to build stability in Kandahar City through improved local governance.

Sub-District Seven Manager Facilitates Grants for Two Villages in Mir Bazaar: In Kandahar City, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development project implements a community stabilization grant (CSG) program designed to empower municipal officials to engage local communities through service delivery. This is in direct support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (GIRoA) plan to support local governance in Kandahar City, Hamkari de Kandahar Lepara. The mayor, sub-district manager, and the provincial reconstruction team identified the Mir Bazaar area of sub-district seven as a priority for the CSG program, due to a historical lack of GIRoA service delivery in the area. USAID completed two CSGs in



Completed cement sidewalk and drainage ditch construction on Ziarat Street in Mir Bazaar. Photo: USAID/LGCD

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Ziarat Street and Shah Sahib Village in Mir Bazaar this week. The two grants generated approximately 888 person-days of short-term employment for local laborers working to construct 447 meters of cement concrete sidewalk and 273 meters of drainage ditch to prevent flooding and mud accumulation during the rainy season. The *Wakil*, a community-elected liaison between local citizens and the municipality for each sub-district, estimates that 70 households will directly benefit from the increased ease of movement and improved sanitary conditions. The CSGs originated from community requests to the *Wakil*. The sub-district manager then personally visited the sites and engaged both communities before selecting the petitions. The completed projects serve as tangible reminders of GIRoA's responsiveness and effective service delivery in Kandahar City.



The Director of Baghlan Department of Public Health addresses the audience. Photo: LISAID/CBSG

USAID Project Procures Blood Bank Equipment: USAID's Community Based Stabilization Grants project completed procurement of blood bank equipment for the Baghlan Provincial Hospital. The equipment was requested and implemented by the provincial Department of Public Health, and the community. Dr. Zubair, head of the provincial Department of Public Health, Dr. Abdul Jabbar, head of the Baghlan Provincial Hospital, Dr. Faisal, a member of the provincial council, Mrs. Zarifi, head of the provincial Department of Women's Affairs. members of provincial Department of Economy, members of provincial Department of Information and Culture, members of the Community Health Committee, and community leaders from across the province attended the ceremony.

Dr. Zubair thanked USAID for its support in procuring the equipment and highlighted the importance of the blood bank in elevating the quality of the hospital's services. He encouraged blood donations to increase stocks in the blood bank for cases of emergency. Dr. Jabbard remarked that the blood bank plays a vital role in the hospital's operations, especially in emergency cases. He added that Baghlan is a transit route for nine provinces, thus it regularly witnesses numerous traffic accidents for which the hospital needs such facilities. According to Jabbard, there has been a tremendous need for a blood bank in the hospital, especially during those times when bomb blasts, suicide attacks, natural disasters, and accidents have occurred.

By supporting the provincial ministry to deliver improved health services to the Afghan people, CBSG is strengthening the relationship between the people and the government and helping to ensure longer-term stability in the area.

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Ribbon cutting for the metalwork training. Photo: USAID/CDP

USAID Celebrates the Opening of a Metalwork Project: On March 28, USAID's Community Development Program (CDP), in collaboration with the Disabled Union and the Department of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled, celebrated the opening of the metalwork project for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Kunduz City. This project will provide 22 disabled people with an opportunity to receive metalwork training that focuses on producing basic household utensils to be sold in the Kunduz market. With improved skill sets, participants will be able to generate income and improve their quality of life while contributing to the areater local economy. the Representatives from Provincial Council, Department of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs,

Disabled, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and the municipality attended the ceremony. Speakers at the ceremony thanked USAID for supporting the local community, and complimented the program for increasing the visibility and value of PWD contributions to the economy and society. Abdul Ahad from the Department of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled added, "I would like to take part in this project by providing literacy materials for the group." Jamila, a provincial council member was quoted as saying, "I encourage disabled beneficiaries to use this great training opportunity in order to continue to advance their skills. From my side, I would try to help this group to link their products with the market in the near future." The participation and support from the participants illustrates the commitment of government and communities to recognize and develop the potential of PWDs in the region.

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Community and Policy Engagement: USAID's Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society II project organized and conducted its first community dialogue training for the managers and community dialogue officers of the project's seven intermediary service organizations on March 23 and 24. This training provided the 14 participants with information on the purpose and function of community dialogues, as well as skills to facilitate such dialogues. In introduced addition, the training participants appreciative inquiry and possible ways of applying AI in the community dialogue process. Over the course of the two days, the training participants learned about and practiced how to design community dialogue management plans, task orders to develop skills in their new professions, and how to evaluate the entire process. Ali



Training participants brainstorming on ways to use Al in running community dialogues. Photo: USAID/I-PACS

Ahmad Zulmai, the community dialogue officer from the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan

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Relief, said, "The appreciative inquiry framework is completely new to me and I think there are pieces of it that will be very helpful to our task of reaching grassroots communities and collecting their ideas and priorities – which is a very large and challenging task."

Based on the feedback of training participants, the counterpart CPE team finalized the first draft of a community dialogue-training manual, which will be used to train all community dialogue facilitators.

Top Afghan Student Teams Compete in International Moot Court Competition: On March 18, the championship team from Kabul University's Faculty of Sharia travelled to Washington, D.C. to compete with top student teams from around the world in the international competition. Ghulum Reza Mohammedy, Afghanistan's National Administrator, was awarded this year's Steven Schneebaum Award for Outstanding National Administrator, selected from among 123 participating team administrators. The Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition is the world's largest and most prestigious moot court competition with teams from more than 500 law schools and 80 different countries. Last year, Afghanistan's team was awarded the "Spirit of the Jessup Award," a recognition devoted to the team that best exemplifies the spirit of camaraderie, academic excellence, competitiveness, and the appreciation of fellow competitors.



Kunar governor, Fazlullah Wahidi, welcomed by 150 selected students for the March 17 opening. Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

EDUCATION

Vocational School Provides Youth Alternatives to Joining the Insurgency: On March 17, the governor of Kunar Province presided over a ceremony celebrating the transition of a USAID-initiated vocational training program, Kunar Construction Company (KCC), into an independent community-based organization, Kunar Vocational Organization (KVO). The school prepares young local people for work in the construction trades, with the majority less than age 24, and with low literacy. Students learn carpentry, masonry, electricity, plumbing, steel bending, and painting. Additionally, the organization is exploring the development of a business center to serve as a hub for needed community trade services like small-engine repair. The business operations will provide

services as well as an opportunity to provide graduating students with additional job experience. KVO graduates are in high demand with construction firms and are particularly vital to local projects providing needed skills and readily available labor.

The governor congratulated KVO/KCC "on the transition to local Afghan governance and confirmed that he's very optimistic about the future of the program." The school offers career training to youth, which provides a viable alternative to joining the insurgency, and therefore greatly contributes to the stabilization of the country.

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Emergency Primary Classes Bring Education to Vulnerable Displaced Communities: Conflict, poverty, and natural disasters have displaced hundreds of Among the country's most thousands of Afghans. vulnerable, many of them now live in makeshift camps and communities without access to clean water and sanitation, and few opportunities for children to attend school. Adela is a young girl who fled the violence in Kunar Province and settled in Behsud District of Nangarhar Province, where large numbers of internally displaced persons now live. While life remains difficult, prospects improved somewhat over the past year as USAID's Partnership for Advancing Community Education in Afghanistan (PACE-A) project established community-based primary classes that specifically target



Fleeing violence, Adela and her family settled among other IDPs in Nangarhar, where she now attends school. Photo: USAID/PACE-A

the children of internally displaced persons and returnees. Adela appreciates the difference PACE-A has made in her life. She just completed first grade, and she and her peers are eager to continue their schooling. "All the girls attended the class regularly. We didn't have any absences. Every girl dreams that she will study a lot, and will be a doctor, or a lawyer, or any other profession of her choice in the future."



Participants at the "Starting a Business" working group meeting to discuss the World Bank's recently released 2012 survey. Photo: USAID/EGGI

ECONOMIC GROWTH

USAID Supports Technical Working Group Meetings for the Doing Business Better Initiative: On March 26, USAID's Economic Growth and Governance Initiative project facilitated a meeting of the "Starting a Business" technical Working Group as part of the Doing Business Better Initiative. The meeting was held at the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) in Kabul with participation from officials of several government ministries and the private sector. The members reviewed previous years' "Doing Business" survey questionnaires from The World Bank and identified individuals to contribute to the recently released survey for 2012. Survey results will be completed by the April 30 deadline. Before concluding the meeting, group members identified

assignments for completion prior to the next meeting. On March 27, USAID conducted a meeting for the "Protecting Investors" technical working group at the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MOCI). The meeting opened with discussions on overall goals and objectives of the group (to improve Afghanistan's ranking from 183 to 172 in the short term, and of course, much better subsequently), and analysis of progress to date. Participants also reviewed the previous year's survey questionnaire and introduced nominees to answer the new survey for 2012.

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On March 29, USAID conducted the "Closing a Business" technical working group meeting at MOCI. The members agreed upon and outlined the group's goals and objectives. Members also reviewed the 2011 and 2010 survey questionnaire and identified nominees to complete the 2012 survey. Participants also discussed potential reforms relevant to improving Afghanistan's ranking on the "closing a business" indicator including licensing reforms and standards in Afghanistan.

USAID Conducts Close-Out Meeting with Key Officials Involved with PSD Strategy Implementation: USAID's Economic Growth and Governance Initiative project wrapped uр activities in private-sector development, including facilitation of implementation of projects defined in the Balkh Private Sector Development (PSD) Strategy. USAID met individually with strategic goal leaders and other key counterparts from the governor's office and provincial council to summarize activities and provide them with final advice on how to proceed with implementation and monitoring of the PSD Strategy. In addition to these individual sessions, USAID organized sessions with key stakeholders to review accomplishments of the project and provide suggestions for sustaining the positive momentum generated with regard to private-sector development activities.



EGGI/Mazar conducts debriefing sessions with key stakeholders involved in promoting the Private Sector Development Strategy in Balkh Province. Photo: USAID/EGGI

addition, USAID is preparing the "Private Sector Development Tool Kit" for distribution to organizations dedicated to carrying this activity forward. Materials such as the PSD Strategy and Balkh Province Business Profile will be copied in larger quantities for broad distribution. All materials will be delivered to core partners to equip them for the continuation of activities in private-sector development.



Students from the Economics Faculty at Nangarhar University listen to a presentation by the DAB East Zone Economist during a recent lecture series. Photo: USAID/EGGI

DAB East Zone Office Conducts Outreach Program for Nangarhar University Economics Faculty: On March 16, the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) East Zone Office, with USAID support, conducted an outreach program for over 180 students and professors from the Economics Department at Nangarhar University in Jalalabad City. Hosted by the DAB East zone director and zone economist, the purpose of the event was to build knowledge of core functions of the Central Bank, DAB's Monetary Policy Department (MPD) activities, and DAB's Five-Year Strategic Plan. The program also provided an opportunity for DAB officials to discuss the benefits of working for the Central Bank and explain the recruitment process with the aim of encouraging students

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to consider employment opportunities with DAB upon graduation.

Efforts to build knowledge of the Central Bank and its core functions among university students were well received. The Nangarhar University vice chancellor was pleased with the event and expressed the desire to organize future DAB outreach programs targeting economics students to enhance their knowledge of the Central Bank's regional activities. The dean of the economics faculty requested the DAB regional director to take on a more interactive role and assist students in practical lessons on banking topics. The DAB regional director committed to having the zone economist visit the university periodically to distribute DAB publications/bulletins to economics faculty students.

Turquoise Mountain Institute Graduated its Second Class of Artisans: On March 30, the Turquoise Mountain Institute for Afghan Arts and Architecture graduated its second class of artisans. Thirty-eight students (13 females) from the schools of Jewelry and Gem-cutting, Woodwork, Ceramics and Calligraphy and Miniature Painting received certificates in recognition of their successful completion of three years of study and training. The ceremony took place in the institute's new home in the recently restored historic 19th century Kabuli buildings of Murad Khane, in the heart of Kabul's Old City. Mohammad Asif Nang, deputy minister for technical and vocational education and training, senior officials from the Ministry of Education and representatives from various vocational training institutes in Kabul attended the event.



Abdul Karim Hameed, representative from Ministry of Social Affairs and Waheed Khalili, director of Turquoise Mountain Institute. Photo: USAID/OEG



INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ghazi High School Opened for Classes: The Ghazi High School opened for classes on March 22, welcoming approximately 5,000 students who attend classes in two shifts per day. Students were enthusiastic about the newly constructed facility and thanked the United States for building such a nice facility. On March 29, Ambassador Khalilzad, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, and distinguished alumnus of the pre-existing Ghazi High School, returned to Ghazi to visit with the students, teachers, Ministry of Education, and USAID representatives. All were pleased with the new facility, and appreciative of this significant contribution by the United States to Afghanistan's education system.

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USAID's Afghanistan Clean Energy Project Installed Street Lights: As part of USAID's Afghanistan Clean Energy Project (ACEP), the installation of 60 solar powered street lights were completed in Feyzabad city on March 23, illuminating a section of the recently completed Keshim-Feyzabad Highway. To mark the occasion, the provincial governor and mayor of Feyzabad took a walk up and down the main street to inspect the work. When the governor arrived, only one street light was on. During the next few minutes, the remaining lights all illuminated, one by one. Pedestrians, bystanders, and shopkeepers who spoke with the USAID representative fully supported the project, and local television stations were on hand to record the event. The solar lights will reduce Feyzabad



New-solar powered street lights in Feyzabad. Photo: USAID/ACEP

municipality's need for diesel fuel, along with its attendant cost and pollution. They will contribute to safety, facilitate nighttime traffic movement, extend market hours along the roadway in the city, and improve security for the Feyzabad city population. The governor of Badakhshan officially dedicated the street lights at a ribbon cutting event on Wednesday, March 30.

Nationwide, ACEP continued to overcome weather, political, and security obstacles and installed solar streetlights in locations throughout Afghanistan. Afghans in many locations expressed gratitude for the safe, secure, and stabilizing street light systems. Upon completion of the project in April, 480 solar streetlights will have been installed in Badakhshan, Bamyan, Hilmand, Kabul, Kandahar, Khost, Nuristan, Paktika, Uruzgan, and Wardak provinces.



Nazir Began, on behalf of Kadastan clinic in Heart Province receives a quality assurance plaque.

Photo: IISAID/HSSP

HEALTH

Recognized Health **Facilities** for **High-Quality Standards:** The USAID-funded Health Services Support Project and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health hosted a ceremony to recognize 37 health facilities from 11 provinces that have met high-quality standards. USAID has worked closely with the ministry to build the capacity of non-governmental organizations to improve the quality of health-care services at these facilities. One of the approaches that USAID uses to accomplish this goal is quality assurance used to improve the performance of individual health providers and health implementing the basic package of health services.

Standards for service provision have been developed for

Afghanistan in 14 different areas such as antenatal care, postnatal care, normal labor, and family planning. Healthcare workers use the standards as job aids, and supervisors use them



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when conducting supportive supervision. Quality assurance is an ongoing process, reflecting the vital concept that achievement of high-quality performance and service delivery should be a continuous endeavor. Since 2006, 442 health facilities in 21 provinces throughout Afghanistan have begun implementing the quality-assurance process. This is the second national quality assurance recognition ceremony. Out of 90 health facilities that completed a full Quality Assurance cycle and therefore became eligible for consideration for recognition, 37 were recognized for their improved and high performance from Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Bamyan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kabul, Paktya, Kandahar, Khost, and Hirat provinces.

"USAID is a key partner with the Ministry of Public Health working to ensure that these health facilities meet and exceed international quality standards of care, and we work closely with the Ministry to expand these quality efforts across the country," said USAID Office Director for Social Sector Development Leslie Perry. "USAID is committed to continuing to work with the Ministry to improve the health of Afghans."